

**Testimony Regarding School Construction Funds for Charter Schools  
& Support for HB 5283: Student Centered Funding  
March 4, 2022**

**Co-Chairs Senator McCrory and Representative Sanchez and distinguished members of the Education Committee**

My name is Laura Fisher I am the Director of School Operations at Achievement First Middle Public Charter School in Bridgeport. I have also had the pleasure of serving as an educator at AF Bridgeport Elementary School for 8 years. As a woman of color from a family of immigrants, it has been my honor to give back to my community by working in education in Bridgeport.

I'm here to speak against the broken educational system in our state. In particular, the way we allocate resources to our public school system is broken. As a result, we are failing our low income and minority populations, particularly our kids in public charter schools. You already know that the largest percentage of kids that attend our schools are underserved and lack equal access to educational funding. I am here before you today to ask you to right this wrong.

**I want to outline some things for you to consider as you deliberate on the needs of kids in underfunded communities like Bridgeport.**

For far too long, many of Connecticut's highest-need school districts have been underfunded, resulting in fewer services and opportunities for students. The list of things our students are missing out on is long, and getting longer. It is hard to imagine that we are all okay with sending students in our community to underfunded schools when there is a \$2.5 billion surplus on the state level.

While recent legislative changes to how Connecticut funds education are helping, bold action is needed to truly provide our state's students with the education they deserve. I am here on behalf of my students, the most underfunded public school students in our state.

Right now, public charter schools do not receive funding for use on our school buildings or facilities. In our school, we have had sewage issues that we haven't been able to repair for a few years, our roof has been leaking for many years, and we have crumbling ceilings in some parts of our building, these are among some of the most dire examples.

We do not have the money to address these issues. Ultimately this impacts our students' learning and their pride in coming to our school buildings. Our amazing children in this city have many challenges they are facing, not including the new social and emotional challenges brought on by COVID-19. My hope is that we work to remove the inequitable treatment of charter school students from the list of obstacles they have to face every day.

**You can support our children by:**

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- Passing a bill that funds our children based on their learning needs, so that as a state we equitably support students in districts like Bridgeport with high concentrations of poverty, districts with high numbers of English language learners, or the property wealth to adequately fund education.
- Ensure public charter schools have access to facilities funding or school construction funding. The state awarded \$6.89 million in bonding almost 4 years ago to my school and others. We have waited patiently for the funds we have been promised. We need those dollars now. Additionally, public charter schools should be added to the existing school construction program.

Our students should not have to continue to wait to receive the education funding they need and deserve. We must fully fund ALL public schools, including our state's 21 public charter schools, now, and finally provide students and teachers in underserved communities across the state with the resources they need, including school construction.

Our team along with everyone who considers the racial funding disparity an unacceptable condition in CT, in the year 2022 will continue to advocate to make it right for all students, including those who are underserved and underfunded in our public charter schools. Please stand with us and enact legislation that will provide equity across the board for all students regardless of zip code, socio economic status, or school type.

Regards,  
**Laura Fisher**

*Director of School Operations*

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[achievementfirst.org](http://achievementfirst.org)